

## AMATEUR ARTISTS.

THE PERSONS WHO WORK FOR PLEASURE AND NOTORIETY.

The Reign of the Amateur and How It is Affecting the Various Professions in Which Mankind is Trying to Earn a Living—A Metropolitan View.

The other day a company of American artists seated at the cheap but filling refectory of Gruyere cheese and the beer of the country amused itself by discussing the serious want of patronage from which American art is just now suffering.

"I tell you," cried a young painter of great talent, "that the professional artist in this country is worse off than ever. There was a time some 15 or 20 years ago when his prospects looked bright and his outlook cheerful. But today he wastes all his time and energy on pot boiling, and even his pot boilers have to go at a sacrifice."

"There are too many of us," quoth one of his hearers. "The supply exceeds the demand, and we are simply paying, in other words of life, for the crime of overproduction."

"There are not too many of us," related the first speaker. "It is the infernal amateurs who are doing work almost as good as ours, and who are underselling us. It is the reign of the amateurs which has taken all the gift off the gingerbread of the professional."

True, absolutely true, in almost every highway and byway of modern industry. The amateur is rapidly displacing the professional to his own slight—sometimes imperceptible benefit, and always to the other's injury. When one stops to consider this truism, one is fairly stunned by the magnitude and quantity of the illustrations which prove it. Take, for instance, the field to which the discussion above quoted has relation. The woods are full of amateur "artists." Hardly a family now exists but has an "artistic" son or daughter who necessarily babbles the jargon of the craft and spoils more canvas and wastes more paint in a week than most professional artists can afford in a year.

Not only do their execrable compositions degrade the standard of art, they do worse and more material harm by making values ridiculously cheap. Glad to get anything at all—half the cost sometimes of the material they use. The amateur painters of New York alone constitute unconsciously a guild which practically starves out the professional. And the worst of it is that the amateur's work is nothing like as conspicuously bad in all instances as it used to be. Sketchy and thin as the best of it may be, it certainly complies with the elementary rules of art, and he must indeed be a bold critic who, comparing it with the efforts of trained and expert professionals, should unhesitatingly pronounce it without exception rot and rubbish.

The amateur actor and the amateur actress have inflicted incalculable injury on what calls itself specifically the profession. It is an open secret, for example, that the once profitable city of Brooklyn has been made a positively "bad show town," as the phrase goes, by the number and audacity of its amateurs. During the season they undertake performances of the severest professional character with a prodigality of energy and expenditure almost amounting to profligate extravagance which utterly eclipses the productions of the regular theaters. In fact, the Brooklyn amateurs have all but destroyed the professional drama in that city.

Again, the concert rooms of New York fairly swarm with unpaid vocalists who acquit themselves in many instances quite as well as their professional sisters and brothers, and there are already so many amateur instrumentalists in this city eager to play in public who have no urgent pecuniary need to do so that it is doubtful if the Musical Protective union dare order another general strike here, so enormous would be the rush of fairly competent amateur fiddlers and others to take the places of the strikers.

Rising higher in the social world, we find howling swells like Sufferer Tailor basing their reputations entirely on their knack of driving four-in-hands in amateur, so that the amateur coachman has become really an important public character and worthy of incessant notice.

The amateur wing shot is another social lion. Compared with the feats of the plain, uncelebrated every day pot hunters of Maryland and Pennsylvania, the performances of George Work and Edgar Murphy and De Forrest Maurice and the rest of them seem positively puerile. But none the less are these latter knights of the trigger exalted and extolled by the newspapers, marvels of skill and vaunted among the possessions of which we ought all to be enthusiastically proud. For are they not amateurs?

At the present rate of development one cannot be certain of the ultimate limit of amateur expansion. We shall, beyond doubt, have amateur surgeons, amateur lawyers, amateur journalists, amateur barbers, amateur tailors, amateur plumbers, amateur tenners, even amateur day laborers, perhaps. Our streets will be patrolled by amateur policemen, our conflagrations extinguished by amateur firemen. And who can tell when the amateur will have so profoundly exhausted the honest occupations that he will have to become an amateur criminal?

Then shall we have our amateur burglars, our amateur pickpockets, our amateur highwaymen, our amateur murderers. The amateur shoplifter is already a formidable extant fact. What on earth is there in our social code to make the amateur homicide and the amateur river pirate impossible?

Yes, I faith, this is the reign of the amateur with a vengeance.—Archibald Gordon in New York Recorder.

A Question of Probability.  
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"That sounds very good."  
"Yes, but it is improbable."  
"Why?"  
"She is all alone."  
"Of course."  
"And puts on her hat to go out."

"Yes."  
"Whom is she going to ask whether it is on straight or not?"—Washington Star.

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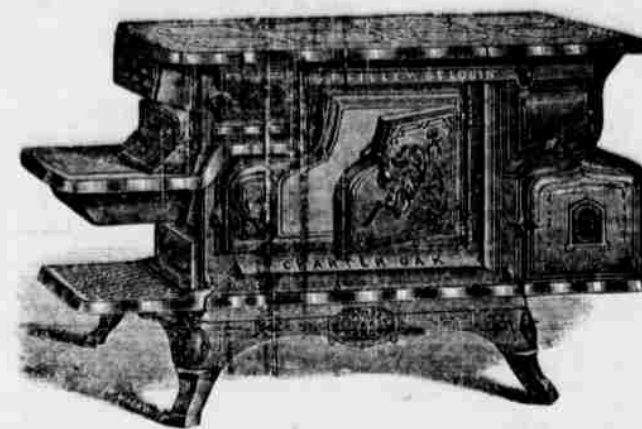
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